

PART 24.

Third
Series

DECEMBER,
1890.

VOL.
4

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM
YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round & Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

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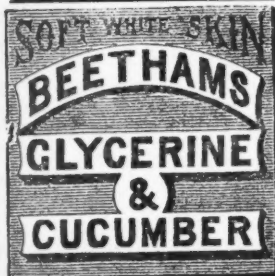
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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 101.—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1890. PRICE TWOPENCE.

"THE LAIRD O' COCKPEN."

By RITA.

Author of "Dame Durden," "Gretchen," "Darby and Joan," "Sheba," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIX.

"COME UNDER MY PLAIDIE."

So my dream had ended. Its beginning had been sudden—so was its termination. All through the hours of that long, sleepless night I lay awake in tearless misery, battling with my shame and sorrow as best I could.

I had loved him so; and he had cared so little. He had but amused himself with me as a novelty—something to talk and jest with in the idle days and hours—and I had given him all my heart, my love, my life!

I knew that so well; I knew it in the agony and self-abasement of that terrible night—a night that left its mark on me for many a year to come; a night in which I cried for death to end my misery, feeling that never again would I care to rise and face the daylight, to hear familiar voices, to see the kindly, smiling faces of my kinsfolk; a night in which I drank of my cup of humiliation to the very dregs.

I had scarcely known how I had hoped, even against hope, for explanation or excuse of Douglas Hay's conduct, until that letter had reached me. But with it all my hopes fell shattered to the ground.

I had been wandering in a world of innocent joy; but now its sunshine was dimmed, its flowers poisoned, its beauty marred for ever.

The next morning I felt too ill to rise

from bed. I pleaded my usual excuse of "headache," and Grannie attributed it to the fatigues of the previous day. She was never fussy or troublesome, the dear old soul. She seemed to recognise that quiet was the best thing for me, and so I lay there all day in my darkened room, with cool bandages on my burning head, and cool drinks for my burning throat; and gradually my pulse grew less feverish, my head throbbed less madly, and the calm of utter weariness and utter despair stole over tortured brain and aching heart.

No one came near me but Grannie; I could not have borne it. Every sound, every voice jarred on my strained nerves; my only prayer was to be alone, quite alone.

There is no need to dwell at length upon this time. Almost every life has to go through some such crisis of misery at some period or another. I went through mine. I cannot tell whether it lasted long—it seemed an eternity; but probably it could not have lasted more than that night and day, for I was up and about as usual the next morning, and to all appearance looking much as I always looked, save for those dark circles under my eyes, and a little additional paleness of my never very rosy cheeks.

Pride had come to my rescue. No one knew my secret; no one should know it. I would live my life; I would travel the road before me; but I alone should know of the knife-thrust in my heart, draining its life-blood with every step of that destined journey.

"Good-bye, Douglas," I cried; "good-bye, hope; good-bye, youth."

The days passed into weeks, the summer

was nearly over now. The time for the Northern meetings was at hand ; I heard of nothing else. The little town was all astir with excitement. The dressmakers had their hands full of work.

The Camerons were to take me to the first day of the Highland games, as Grannie did not care to go.

The day was cold and showery, and I dressed myself for the great occasion with many shivers, and a growing disinclination to accompany my cousins.

However, when they all descended upon me in a cheery and excitable frame of mind, scorning to see any threats in the gloomy clouds, or detect any chill in the rising wind, I was fain to appear cheerful too, and we all set out for the festive gathering.

The Grand Stand was cold and draughty, and the threatened rain descended just as the procession of pipers appeared on the scene with their brilliant tartans and flying ribbons.

I had grown more and more depressed as the day had gone on, and I was huddled up in my corner, shivering and melancholy, as the weird strains of the bagpipes sounded from the distance. Just then a kind and familiar voice sounded close to my ear.

"Miss Lindsay, you look so cold and chilly. Do me the pleasure to accept this plaid."

I half turned my head and saw the Laird sitting just behind me.

His kindly grey eyes, his honest, concerned face gave me a sense of pleasure and friendliness to which I had long been a stranger.

"Thank you!" I said, cordially. "There's no use denying it, Mr. Campbell; I am cold—horribly cold."

The thick tartan plaid was wrapped round my shoulders immediately, and the sense of warmth and comfort it brought made me feel quite genially disposed to its owner. He leant forward and chatted away to me, explaining the gyrations of the players, the names of the clans they represented, and the tunes they played in such spirited and exhilarating fashion. Bella and Flora had recognised his proximity by this time, and Kenneth had favoured him with a somewhat distant bow—they were no within hand-shaking distance.

The rain had now evidently made up its mind to hold off no longer, and from a scattered showeriness had settled down into a good, steady downpour. The sun

had finally hid his face for the day. All over the great wide expanse of sky the leaden clouds were rolling, and massing themselves in a gloomy phalanx. The wind swept coldly and cheerlessly over the open ground, and even the pipers seemed to lose heart, and the proceedings were brought to a close.

There was a stampede out of the building—the rain was dripping through crevices in the roof, and the wind blew gusty showers into the faces of those occupying the front rows of seats.

Every one looked more or less blue, and damp, and dismal. The Laird kept beside me, and insisted on my still wearing the warm, thick plaid.

"How will ye be going home?" he asked Flora, who was looking extremely chilly and disconsolate in her thin summer dress and airy bonnet—neither of which was at all suitable to the day.

"Oh, we must have a fly, and pack ourselves into it," she said, rather ill-temperedly.

"Then may I see your cousin back to Craig Bank?" he said. "I have a covered carriage here. It is quite at her service."

"Oh, thank you," cried Flora, eagerly; "that will save us going out of our way; and will you please explain to Mrs. Lindsay——?"

"Certainly, certainly," he said, cutting short her words, and regardless of Kenneth's scowls. As for myself, I was only too thankful to get home to care how or with whom I journeyed.

We all parted somewhat hurriedly, and the Laird put me into a comfortable carriage, and seated himself opposite to me; and through the now blinding rain I was driven swiftly home to Craig Bank.

Grannie was looking anxiously out of the window, and there was no small amazement visible in her face as she saw my companion.

He followed me into the house. A blazing fire gave us welcome in the dining-room; the table was laid for dinner. It was very pleasant after the cold and damp of the outer air.

I threw off the plaid, and went eagerly up to the fire. I left the Laird to make his own explanations. Presently I heard Grannie urging him to take "pot-luck" and stay to dinner.

He hesitated for a moment, and then accepted—only asking if he might give his coachman the necessary orders as to going back to the stables.

I thought how pleased and radiant Grannie looked as I slowly dragged my tired and half-frozen limbs upstairs, and removed my hat and finery for the plain, dark serge of every-day life.

The soup was on the table when I went down; and the Laird, grave-eyed, and stolid as ever, took the chair opposite mine.

I had not seen him since the night of his proposal; he had left Inverness next day, and been at his own place, Corriemoor, ever since. I listened silently as he and Grannie chatted on about all the topics of general and local interest. From time to time I caught the grey eyes looking at me with an intent, observant gaze.

I wondered whether he detected any change in my appearance. To me it seemed apparent enough. I had never been very brilliant at conversation, but now it seemed more of an effort than ever; when he spoke to me my replies were as brief as they well could be. His presence was another stab to memory; it brought back the night of that dinner-party—the last night I had spent with my love; the last night I had seen his handsome face, and heard the ringing notes of the voice I had learnt to love so dearly. Ah me! how long ago it all seemed, how wearily long ago!

Dinner was over. The rain still poured down in a steady, uncompromising fashion, and Grannie would not hear of her guest departing.

We drew up our chairs to the fire, and chatted—or, rather, they chatted, and I listened. The Laird seemed in wonderfully good spirits; I even found myself laughing at some of his anecdotes and descriptions. Once Grannie left the room on some errand or excuse, and I found myself alone with my quondam suitor.

A momentary silence fell between us. Then he looked at me in his direct, simple fashion.

"You are not looking well, Miss Lindsay," he said; "you are pale and thin. Are you minded to stay on for the winter in Scotland?"

"I have not thought about it yet," I said. "Grannie seems loth to part with me; but I don't know what my father's wishes on the subject may be."

He was silent for a time.

"Perhaps the air is too bleak and strong for you?" he said. "You look as white

and frail as a snowdrop. I felt just horrified when I saw you at the meeting yonder."

I coloured slightly at his look and tone.

"Oh," I said, lightly, "I am well enough. Pray don't regard me as an invalid. You know I was not very robust when I came here; but I think I have grown much stronger now."

"I hope so," he said, doubtfully; "but you must excuse my saying that your looks are very unlike your words; and you are not bright and merry, as a young thing should be. Are you in any trouble? If you would but let me be a friend to you, help you, it would make me so happy."

"You are very kind," I said, my voice a little tremulous, for something in his earnest face and kind, grey eyes touched me deeply; "but, indeed, I am quite well—as well as I shall ever be."

"But there is a trouble," he said, gently; "I am sure of it; but I cannot press for your confidence, Miss Lindsay; I have no right to it. I—I wish I had."

I was silent. A feeling of embarrassment sprang up between us, and I began to wish heartily for Grannie's return. I glanced at the window; the day was rapidly closing in; the dull, grey rain and mist made the prospect very dismal.

His eyes followed mine.

"I am staying at the hotel for a few days," he said; "I arrived last night. I suppose it is about time for me to take my leave now?"

He rose, and walked to the window, and stood for a moment there, looking out at the wet trees and the sodden ground. I also rose, and fetched the plaid which he had lent me, and laid it on the table.

"Will you take this?" I asked, hesitatingly; "or shall I send it to the hotel?"

He turned quickly, and glanced from the wrap to me.

"You have greatly honoured me by wearing it, Miss Lindsay. From this time it is a possession of value to me. I will take it myself—unless—unless——"

I looked at him enquiringly, a little conscious flush rising to my face.

"Unless you would still further honour me by keeping it," he said, at last, making a vigorous effort to appear natural and unconstrained; "in memory of some slight service it has done you," he added, in a lower key.

I felt somewhat embarrassed. The plaid was a very handsome one of his own tartan; but I scarcely liked to accept it as a gift from him under the circumstances.

"You are very good," I stammered, blushing furiously as I met his eyes; "but I don't like—I mean, I think Grannie would hardly like me to accept such a handsome present from you."

"I am not asking your grandmother's opinion," he said, somewhat sternly; "I only wish for yours. Will you not accept it in the same spirit in which it is offered, and for sake of—some one—who cares very dearly for you, although he knows he is but a fool for his pains?"

"I—I am sure you are not a fool!" I exclaimed, warmly; "and certainly I will accept your gift in the spirit you offer it. It is most kind of you; and I think I should have caught my death of cold to-day had it not been for that plaid."

He was still standing by the window, his face slightly averted.

"Do you remember the old song?" he said somewhat hesitatingly. "I fear that is very much how I felt to-day. Oh, Athole, if I could only tell you how much you are to me! how gladly I would shield you from 'every could blast that may blaw,' every hardship, every trouble! But there, it is no use; we will speak of it no more."

CHAPTER XX. "BELIEVING THE WORST."

BELLA and I were sitting over the fire. Grannie had gone to bed with a bad cold, and my cousin and I had the little parlour to ourselves. A week had passed since the day I had witnessed the Highland games—since the Laird had presented me with his plaid; since Grannie—staid and proper as she was—had decreed I might accept that gift without any outrage to the laws of propriety. I had seen him once or twice since then; but we had had no more confidential talks.

The weather had changed entirely for the worse. Day after day the gloomy clouds poured down their torrents of rain, only relieved by occasional wild gleams of sunshine which would burst through the riven clouds with a mocking promise they never fulfilled. I scarcely left the house, for the chill I had caught had left me weak and languid; and the doctor Grannie called in declared I needed the greatest care.

How good they were to me, those dear Scotch folk! What tenderness and thoughtfulness, what coddling and comfort, what

petting and fussing there was over me! And now Grannie was ill herself, and Bella had come to stay with us and nurse her; and so we two were sitting cosily by the bright fire after supper, chatting in disjointed, lazy fashion, as we generally did, and without the slightest inclination to go to bed, as old Jean had suggested to us a few moments before.

The steaming port wine negus she had brought us was on the table, the firelight threw pleasant glints of brightness across the shadows. Bella leant back in the big, comfortable arm-chair, and gave a sigh of comfort.

"If you had ever been one of a large family, Athole," she said, "you would appreciate the luxury of peace and quiet like this."

"I suppose," I said, somewhat absently, "that one never does appreciate what one always has, or can have. It seems so. Now, I like brightness, life, animation, about me. When everything is so quiet one cannot help thinking and remembering——"

"You're ower young for that," said Bella. "I wish you were not so grave and old-fashioned. Just for a wee while you seemed to brisk up, and get quite bright and lightsome; but you've fallen back again, and your little face looks so white and weariful at times that I'm quite sad to see it. You're not happy, Athole, and I could make a shrewd guess to say why, if you would not be angry with me."

Then, why or wherefore I cannot say, but quite suddenly all my strength seemed to go from me. The hands, lying loosely-clasped on my lap, began to tremble, and the trembling spread to my limbs, and a sudden fear of myself came over me that I should break down; that I should not be able to hide my sorrow and my suffering always; that others guessed, knew, pitied me. I half turned away; I stretched out my hand to take the glass of negus which old Jean always prepared for me, but even as I lifted the glass my hand fell shaking upon the table. A little hysterical laugh escaped me.

"I believe," I said, "that I am growing nervous."

In a moment she had slipped down from her chair, and was kneeling by me, her arms round my trembling figure, her kind, dear eyes gazing up to mine.

"Oh, Athole, dear wee cousin, why won't you be frank with me—why won't you let me help you? Do you think I can't see the change—that I don't know

you're just breaking your heart for sake of that fickle, worthless ne'er-do-weel? You've never been the same since he went to Edinburgh."

I was silent. My heart beat with heavy, laboured throbs; I felt weak, and faint, and powerless. Perhaps she saw some change in my face, for her eyes looked frightened, and she rose quickly.

"Drink this, dearie," she said, holding the warm, spiced wine to my trembling lips; "it will do you good. You look like a ghost."

I obeyed her, and the warm, stimulating fluid seemed to put some life and strength into me. I leant back in my chair; my hands and lips were steady now.

"I—I am very foolish," I stammered. "Don't mind me, Bella; I shall be all right in a minute."

Tears were dangerously near my eyes, but I would not give way; I put strong constraint upon myself. She stood there beside me in sympathetic silence, only stroking my hair with her firm, white hand—the hand the very touch of which had always seemed to me to mean strength, help, kindness.

"Now you are better," she said, at last, and drew me into her arms as she resumed her seat in Grannie's capacious chair; "but all the same this will not do, Athole. You came here to gain health, not to lose it."

"I wonder," I said, wearily, "if it is very hard to die?"

She looked at me steadily for a moment.

"Do you wish to do it?" she asked.

"Yes," I answered. "I assure you, Bella, I do not care to live; I don't seem to have anything that gives me any interest or hold on life. I am not one of those whose place would be missed; whose presence or absence would make much difference; and—and—oh, Bella, I think my heart is broken—my heart is broken——"

With a wild sob I clung to her, trembling like a leaf, and with all self-restraint gone from me.

"Hush, dearie, hush!" she said, soothingly; "you're tired, and weak, and unstrung; and I know you have had a great trouble. You are very brave over it, but it has hurt you. Won't it make you easier to speak of it? You know I love you dearly; your confidence is safe with me."

"Oh, I know, I know!" I sobbed;

"but how can I tell you? How can I speak of it? It is all over now, Bella; I have got to live on, and live through it, and—and trust to time for forgetfulness."

"He—he made love to you, then, and you believed him, after all I told you, Athole?"

"Yes, after all you told me, Bella. It was very unwise."

"Poor little child! poor little cousin!" she said, tenderly. "But perhaps it is not so bad as you think. He may care; he seemed very fond of you—I saw that from the first—and he may have been obliged to go away in that sudden manner."

"Oh!" I cried, between my sobs; "it is—not that—it is not that. He wrote to me from Edinburgh—such a cold, cruel letter, Bella—and I could see then, so plainly. It had only been a passing fancy with him; but for me—oh, it means all my life for me, Bella. I—I cannot forget."

"You will some day," she said; "you are too good and true to waste your life on an unworthy and unprincipled man."

"I suppose," I said, wearily, "he is all you say—all every one says of him. But he seemed so different, Bella."

"He was aye good at make believe," said my cousin, wrathfully. "They used to say he boasted he could turn the head of any lass, gentle or simple, after half an hour's talk with her. He had just such a way with him."

Such a way with him! I thought of the handsome face, the bright eyes, the winning speech, the charm of look and manner, and my heart echoed her words; and I had been so ready to believe, so easy to win.

"Have you heard," asked Bella, presently, "that Mrs. Dunleith has left the Rowans, and gone to Edinburgh?"

I started involuntarily.

"To Edinburgh?" I faltered. "No, I did not know."

My jealous fancy followed her, imagining her reasons, supplying all details. She had gone to Edinburgh because he was there. No doubt he wished it, finding her infinitely more alluring and interesting than a simple girl—a girl whose fault had been that one inexcusable fault of letting him win her too easily.

My tears dried; a hot flush of shame and indignation sprang to my cheeks. Pride came to my aid at last. Why

should I fret and make myself miserable for sake of one so faithless?

I slipped down from Bella's arms and took the low stool in front of the fire.

"Now," I said, leaning my head against her knee, "I want you to tell me everything bad that you know of Douglas Hay—every story, every scandal, whatever you have heard of him. Don't keep anything back; I want to know the worst, the very worst. It may cure me—I hope it will. Don't be afraid of hurting me, Bella. I can bear it, indeed I can, and perhaps it will ease this pain of heart. I seem to have borne it so long, and it hurts me, oh, it hurts me!"

"Oh, my dear, my dear," said Bella, sadly, "there will be no healing of that wound for many a long day. I know it well. And what can I say more than I have said from the first? I blame myself often that I let you meet him; but I suppose it was to be—I could not have prevented it. And this I will tell you, dearie: I never saw Douglas so much in earnest before. That night, here, why the blindest person could not but notice that his eyes and ears and care were all for you. Still, he has always been fickle—I suppose it is his nature; and, shall I tell you something, Athole? I fancy—I have heard hints of it—that Mrs. Dunleith has some hold on him; and she is a woman of the world, and you but a child in comparison—and perhaps it was owing to her he left so suddenly."

I shook my head. I remembered his letter; every word of it burnt like flame in my memory. Over and over again I told myself there was no excuse for him—none. If he had loved me as I loved him, as he had sworn he loved me, he could not have been so cruel. He could not have left me in silence and suspense.

I knew then—better, perhaps, than I would confess to myself—that the worse I thought of Douglas Hay, the more resentful and hard I became, the better it would be for me. I must forget him, if ever I desired any peace of mind. But at that time I never expected I should accomplish the task save at the cost of all that made up life for me—perhaps, even, of that life itself.

The blow had gone cruelly home, the wound was very, very deep, and as yet I had but small belief in the consolation of Time, and the long vista of days and months that must be lived through looked

very blank, and very dark, and very hopeless then.

Bella talked on, and I listened, my heart heavy within me at every fresh proof of my lover's unworthiness; for though I sought for such proof and demanded it, it had power to hurt me more than I confessed.

For always, always I seemed to see his face, and the love-light in his eyes, and to hear his voice, saying:

"Can you not trust me, sweetheart, in spite of all?"

But it seemed to me that he had killed all faith in men and men's words for ever in my heart, and left in it only the dull ache of ceaseless pain, and a passive acquiescence in what Fate might bestow.

SOME NOTABLE DINNERS IN THE REIGN OF LOUIS QUATORZE.

THE etiquette which prevailed at Versailles was of the most minutely elaborate character, and governed every movement of the King and those about him from the very moment he opened his august eyes until he closed them in sleep. He was the centre of the whole; it was a drama, daily repeated—the same characters, the same scenes, the same details—oppressive in its sameness, fatiguing in its constant pressure. I have neither the space nor the inclination to dwell on all the extraordinary ceremonial of the State dinner; the twenty or thirty grondees fluttering around the King's plates and glasses; the sacramental utterances of the occasion; the gaudy procession of the retinue; the arrival of la nef—that is, the centre piece of plate which contained, between scented cushions, the King's napkins; and l'essai des plats—the tasting of each dish by the gentlemen servants and officers of the table before the King partook of it. The same custom was observed with the beverages. It took four persons to serve the King with a glass of wine and water. Well might Frederick the Great, on hearing an account of all this tyranny of etiquette, exclaim, that if he were King of France his first edict would be to appoint another King to hold Court in his place.

That remarkable adventurer, Casanova, describes a dinner of the Queen at Fontainebleau.

"I was introduced," he says, "into a superb saloon, where I found about a dozen courtiers promenading, and a table set with as many covers, though it was really pre-

pared for one person only. . . The Queen sat down while the twelve courtiers took their positions in a semi-circle ten steps from the table. I stood alongside of them, imitating their deferential silence. Her Majesty began to eat very fast, keeping her eyes fixed on the plate. Finding one of the dishes to her taste she returned to it, and then, running her eye around the circle, she said :

"Monsieur de Lowenthal !"

"On hearing his name, a fine-looking man advanced, bowing, and he replied :

"Madame ?"

"I find that this ragout is fricasséed chicken ?"

"I believe it is, Madame."

"On making this answer in the gravest manner, the Marshal, retiring backwards, resumed his position, while the Queen finished her dinner, never uttering another word, and going back to her room the same way as she came."

The luxury of the Court was imitated by la haute noblesse, whose establishments were all maintained on the most extensive scale. At Chateaufort, the seat of the Duc de Penthièvre, all who came to pay their respects were invited to dinner, the nobles at the Duke's table, and the rest at the table of his first gentleman. The Duc de Gèvres gave a grand dinner every day. Five times a week, at the Duc de Choiseul's, the chief butler entered the drawing-room to glance round the immense crowded gallery, and decide whether he should lay covers for fifty, sixty, or eighty guests. The Marshal de Boufflers, at Compiègne, kept two tables for twenty and twenty-five persons, besides extra tables. Seventy-two cooks, three hundred and forty domestics, four hundred dozens of napkins, eighty dozens of silver plates, six dozens of porcelain plates. These figures will give some idea of the equipment of his cuisine. Fourteen relays of horses brought fruits and liquors daily from Paris; and a daily express conveyed fish, poultry, and game from Ghent, Brussels, Dunkirk, Dieppe, and Calais. Fifty dozens of wine were drunk on ordinary days, and eighty dozens during the visits of the King and the Princes. The King's ministers were compelled to a similar profusion. All kept open tables at Paris three days in the week, and at Fontainebleau every day. When M. de Lamoignon was appointed Chancellor, with a salary of one hundred thousand crowns, everybody prophesied he would be ruined; for he took on all the officials

of M. d'Aguesseau's kitchens, whose table alone cost eighty thousand livres. The dinner he gave at Versailles on holding his first council cost six thousand livres. He had always seats at his table, at Versailles and at Paris, for twenty persons. It was an age of dinners—this *Siècle de Louis Quatorze*; the cook was the most important personage in every household; the art of la cuisine was the most popular of all the arts.

The ladies sometimes played at cooking. Thus, L'Abbé Barthélemy writes of the Duchesse de Lauzun: "Do you know that no one possesses in a greater degree one talent, which you would never have suspected in her—that of scrambling eggs? It has lain buried in the ground; she cannot remember when she acquired it, and I believe it was born with her. Accident revealed it, and it was immediately put to the test. Yesterday, a day ever memorable in the history of eggs, the implements necessary for this operation were all brought out—a heater, some gravy, pepper, salt, and eggs. Behold madame, at first blushing and tremulous, but soon with intrepid courage, breaking the eggs, beating them up in the pan, turning them over, now to the right, now to the left, now up and now down, with unexampled precision and success! Never was a more excellent dish eaten!"

Here is a pleasant story about one magnificent King:

A species of peach much esteemed in France is the *pêche de Montreuil*, which was introduced by one Girardot, an old musketeer, Chevalier de Saint-Louis, and finally a gardener. Having received several severe wounds, he was at last compelled to quit the corps of musketeers—made famous, as everybody knows, by Athos, Porthos, and d'Artagnan ("les Trois Mousquetaires")—and retiring to his little property of Malassis, situated between the villages of Montreuil and Bagnolet, he devoted himself to the cultivation of fruit-trees, assisted by the advice of his friend La Quintinie, the King's head gardener at Versailles, and author of "*Instruction pour les Jardins Fruitiers et Potagers*."

Having a favour to ask of the King, La Quintinie one day informed him that the King was going to hunt at Chantilly with the Prince de Condé; but he would endeavour to get the chase directed towards Montreuil, and that Girardot, therefore, should hold himself prepared for the chance of a Royal visit.

On the following day a basket containing twelve superb peaches was deposited at the office of the King's steward—or some other official—with the inscription: "Pour le Dessert du Roi." These peaches attracted everybody's admiration. A few days later, Girardot was gratified by a visit from Louis, who, conducted by La Quintinie, came to see the espaliers which yielded such noble fruit, and at the same time to thank the gardener for his loyal gift. The old musketeer, wearing his much-prized uniform, received his sovereign with humility, and ventured to submit his little petition, which Louis immediately granted, besides bestowing on him a pension, and granting him permission to furnish annually, pour le Dessert du Roi, a basket of his pêches de Montreuil.

This custom was continued by Girardot's descendants and the inhabitants of Montreuil, where he had resided, down to 1789.

Towards the close of the reign of le Grand Monarque, gingerbread—which is now a schoolboy's dainty—recovered its vogue at the table of Lucullus; more particularly the varieties made at Rheims, and sold as croquets and nonettes. I mention gingerbread because it has quite a history. It was highly esteemed among the Romans, and constituted the offering which the poor made to the immortal gods. The Greeks, to go further back, served it up at dessert. When it was introduced into France I know not; but at the banquets of the French Kings it was always conspicuous. It is said that Agnes Sorel, the fair and patriotic mistress of Charles the Seventh, was never tired of eating it; and some authorities aver that her enemy, the Dauphin, afterwards Louis the Eleventh, administered in a piece of gingerbread the poison of which she died. Marguerite of Valois, sister of Francis the First, was not less partial to it. But it suddenly fell out of favour in the following reign, from a belief that it was used by the Italian poisoners as a medium for their deadly compounds, nor did the taste for it revive until, as I have said, the reign of Louis the Fourteenth.

Louis the Fourteenth was a daring eater. His faculty of absorption was truly royal. The Duchesse d'Orléans records that she frequently saw him devour—there is no other word for it—four platefuls of different soups, a whole pheasant, a partridge, a plateful of salad, mutton hashed with

garlic, two large slices of ham, and a dish of pastry, finishing up with fruit and sweetmeats.

Four platefuls of soup! This reminds me that all the Bourbons have been partial to soup. That degenerate scion, Louis Philippe, even surpassed his magnificent predecessor, for he swallowed five platefuls! Four were of different kinds of soup, and the fifth was a mixture of the four. In this French partiality for le bouillon originated, perhaps, the mot of a celebrated German diplomatist, who was anxious, in 1792, to prevent the Prussian King and the Austrian Emperor from declaring war against Republican France, and gave them the shrewd, but, unfortunately, neglected advice, "to let the Revolution boil in its own pot"—"laissez donc bouillir la Révolution Française dans sa marmite"—a saying which would seem to have been in Prince Bismarck's mind when he talked of letting Paris "stew in its own juice."

A proverb which belongs to this reign, "A bon vin, bon Latin"—"to good wine, good Latin"—may here be expounded. The first President of the Parliament of Paris, M. de Lamoignon, being in want of a librarian, sought the assistance of M. Hermant, the rector of the University, who recommended M. Baillet, an accomplished scholar. The President, before concluding an engagement, wished to make his acquaintance, and invited him to dinner. Baillet went; but perceiving that he was surrounded by pedants, who wished to put him through his facings—as they say in the army—he replied in monosyllables only to their empty queries. They asked him in Latin how he liked the wine—vinum, neuter, as every schoolboy knows. It was poor stuff, and he answered, "Bonus"—in the masculine. The guests burst out laughing, and made up their minds that the candidate was a fool. But when, with the dessert, wine of a better quality was forthcoming, and to enjoy another opportunity of laughing at him, they repeated their question, Baillet answered: "Bonum."

"Oh, oh! ah, ah, ah!" shouted the guests; "now you show yourself a good Latinist."

"Aye, aye," rejoined Baillet, "à bon vin, bon Latin!" (For good wine, good Latin.)

It is said that liqueurs date from the old age of Louis the Fourteenth, and that they were invented by Fagon, his chief

physician, who was also a distinguished chemist, in order to rejuvenate and comfort the venerable monarch; but there seems reason to believe that ratafias and other elixirs were known as early as the reign of Charles the Seventh.

The most brilliant woman in Louis the Fourteenth's Court was Madame Cornuel—née Anne Bigot—the wife of the dull and elderly Trésorier de l'extraordinaire des Guerres, whose household also included Mademoiselle le Gendre, his step-daughter, and his daughter, Margot, by his first wife. These two young ladies, and Madame Cornuel, who was about the same age—three pretty and attractive women, with plenty of l'esprit—shone like a galaxy in the world of fashion, and with their smiles and sallies gave a relish to the Treasurer's dinners which they never before possessed. It was Madame Cornuel, however, whose wit was the brightest and most incisive; as keen and polished as a rapier, it drew blood almost before the victim knew he was wounded. Of the Duc de Richelieu, who makes so conspicuous a figure on the canvas of Louis the Fourteenth's reign, she said: "He has a good heart, but to administer so good a heart some judgement is required." When, after the death of Marshal Turenne, Louis repaired his kingdom's loss by turning eight indifferent generals into marshals of France, she called them "the small change for Turenne." Detained one day in the minister Colbert's ante-chamber, which was crowded with supplicants and sycophants, she said: "I thought I must be in hell—it was so hot, and everybody seemed so discontented!" His guests did not find the Treasurer's entrées less agreeable, nor his wines less stimulating, because they were flavoured with such epigrammatic felicities.

Scarcely less brilliant was Madame de Coulanges, the wife of Emmanuel de Coulanges—the "little fat cousin" of Madame de Sévigné. She is described by Madame de Caylus as possessing "an agreeable figure and mind"; her conversation was full of "sparkling and lively phrases," while perfectly natural in style. At Court she was always welcome; for she knew how to amuse and be amused. "Finesse and delicacy of thought distinguished her; always ready, always pertinent, adorning with her own peculiar grace the airiest trifles, wrapping up the idea in the thinnest disguise of cut filigree paper—the very genius of sous-entendre and double meaning."

On the death of the notorious Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, she observed, that the only two trifling obstacles in the way of preaching his funeral discourse were—his life and his death. Another time she said: "The passions are horrible. I never hated them so much as now, when they are no longer at my command—this is fortunate." Telling Madame le Grignan how anxious she was for her friendship, she said: "I long too much for your reproaches to deserve them."

Her husband was a bon vivant of the first water—a chronic diner-out, a professional humorist, who regaled his noble hosts and their guests with epigrams, chansons, and pearls of gossip. He was a great feeder; loved nothing better than a good dinner—which not infrequently stimulated the origin of his verses, as in his celebrated triquet, beginning

Quel boeuf, quel veau, quel mouton.

Horace Walpole says somewhere: "You seem to take me for Coulanges; you describe eatables so feelingly." He has been slandered as "the epicurean pig"; surely a most inappropriate nickname for the man who had the wisdom to lay down as an irrefutable axiom, "There is nothing to equal a stomach that digests!" The truth is, he was a man of considerable ability, and of rare talents as a boon companion; but he refused to take life seriously, and asked for nothing better than good company and a good dinner. He was, as I have said, a regular diner-out, and went from one château to another—always welcome, always received with warmth—whether by the Duc and Duchesse de Chaulnes, by the Grand Dauphin at Choisy, or the Cardinal de Bouillon at Saint-Martin. No one ventured to offer an opinion on a new dish until he had blessed or banned it. The best cooks of the day waited tremblingly for his verdict. It would seem that sometimes things went wrong, however, even in the exalted society to which he was admitted. Here is his description of a dinner to which he was invited by the Duc de Chaulnes:

"Meanwhile, the dirty spoons were collecting upon the plates, which had been used for various purposes; and as I had, unluckily, called for a 'vive,' Madame de Saint-Germain put one of the finest on a plate to send to me. In vain I declined sauce; but the lady, assuring me that the fish was nothing without sauce, deluged it with the liquid three times,

with the help of the spoon fresh from her beautiful mouth. Madame de la Salle never served a single dish except with her fingers. In a word, I never saw more filth; and our good Duke was dirtier than anybody else."

In the letters of Madame de Sévigné—most charming of letter-writers! so tender and true, so sparkling, and yet so sensible, so observant, without being censorious, and humorous without being coarse, gentle even in her satire, and never devoid of womanly grace and feeling—occur not a few sketches which might aptly serve my present purpose—such as those of Fouquet and his wonder-palace at Vaux; his rapid rise; his course of splendour; and his sudden collapse—but I must limit myself to the dramatic narrative of the death of the great cook, the chef de chefs, Vatel:

In April, 1671, Louis the Fourteenth, wishing to do honour to the Prince de Condé, whom he had appointed to command the army intended for the invasion of Holland, paid him a visit at his beautiful seat of Chantilly—one of Le Nôtre's masterpieces. The details of the fête, which was supreme in its magnificence, were superintended by the Duc d'Enghien himself; the dinner-tables were in charge of Vatel.

"The King arrived on Thursday evening," says Madame de Sévigné. "The hunt, the lanterns, the moonlight, the promenading, the collation, in a garden of jonquils, were all that could be desired. Dinner-time came; the rôti proved insufficient at one or two tables owing to some unexpected guests. This upset Vatel. He repeated several times, 'My honour is lost; this is a disgrace I cannot endure.' He said to Gourville:

"My head fails me; I have not slept for twelve nights; help me to give my orders."

"Gourville did his best to reassure him. The joints which had failed—not at the King's table, but at the twenty-fifth—haunted his imagination. Gourville told Monsieur le Prince, who went up to his room, and said to him:

"Vatel, all is well; never was anything so beautiful as the King's dinner."

"Monseigneur," he answered, "your goodness overwhelms me. I know the rôti failed at two tables."

"Nothing of the kind," said the Prince; "do not disturb yourself; all is well."

"Midnight comes; the fireworks do not succeed—a cloud overspread them; they cost sixteen thousand francs. At four in the morning Vatel wanders all over the place. Everything is wrapped in slumber. He meets a small purveyor with two loads of fish.

"Is that all?" he asks.

"Yes, sir."

"The man was unaware that Vatel had sent to all the great seaport towns in France. They wait some time; the other purveyors do not make their appearance. Vatel grows excited; he thinks that no more fish will come. He seeks out Gourville, and says to him:

"Sir, I shall never be able to survive this disgrace. My honour and reputation are at stake."

"Gourville only laughs at him. Then Vatel retires to his own room, puts his sword against the door, and runs it through his heart—at the third thrust, for he gave himself two wounds which proved ineffectual. Meanwhile, from all parts the fish comes pouring in. People are looking for Vatel to give his orders for disposing of it; they reach his room; they call him; they burst open his door; they find him—lying bathed in his blood. Monsieur le Prince is hastily summoned. He is in despair. . . . He tells the King sadly: 'It is said to be the fault of his extreme code of honour.' They praised him; they praised and yet blamed his courage. . . . Gourville endeavoured to repair the loss of Vatel, and succeeded. The dinner was excellent; so was the luncheon. They supped; they walked. There were games, there was hunting. The scent of the jonquils was everywhere; it was a scene enchanted."

A dinner was the indirect suggestion of one of the most amusing scenes in Molière's "Tartuffe"; and more—it helped to secure for the great dramatist the patronage of Louis the Fourteenth.

At this time was published the first French cookery-book, written by the Sieur de la Varanne, esquire of the kitchen to the Marquis d'Uxelles, a celebrated soldier and Marshal of France. It is dedicated to the Marquis, whose lofty position is recognised, almost ludicrously, by the author. "Monseigneur," he begins, "bien que ma condition ne me rende pas capable d'un cœur héroïque, elle me donne cependant assez de resentment pour ne pas oublier mon devoir. J'ai trouvé dans votre maison, par un emploi de dix ans entiers, le secret

d'apprester délicatement les vivandes." (Ah, if that secret could but be mastered by our English "good plain cooks!") In his preface Varanne claims that his is the first book composed with a view of preserving and maintaining good health and a good disposition; and the first which teaches how to dismiss the unwholesome qualities of different kinds of food by good and diversified seasonings, and to bring out their nutritious properties. He dwells on the thousand and one vegetables which people fail to dress "avec honneur et contentement"; and argued that as France surpasses all other countries in courtesy and "bien-séance," so shall she surpass them in "la façon de vivre honnête et délicate." A feature of his system of cookery is the very frequent use of capers, which are nowadays but sparingly introduced into our dishes.

Carême, speaking of the cookery of France at this period, admits its luxury, its sumptuousness, its variety, but censures it as deficient in "delicate sensualism," which seems a pity! The Court, he says, ate well and wisely; but the rich bourgeois, the man of letters, the artist, "were only beginning to know how to dine, drink, and be merry avec convenance. The great Vatel, whose melancholy death belongs to the romance of the cuisine, had a mind intent upon it—a mind supremely conscious of the obligations of duty and etiquette—but not an inventive or resourceful mind. Hence, his death strikes but does not move you; he had not attained to the highest elevation of his art!"

Voltaire—the greatest literary man in that "Siècle de Louis Quatorze," of which he is the brilliant historian—was a great diner-out; and though he preferred the reputation of a wit to that of a gastronome, there can be no doubt that he had a pretty taste in the matter of cookery. In his earlier career, a table where he was always welcome and always sure to find a good dinner was that of the Duc de Sully. Unfortunately, he dined there once too often; for, being called away from les friandises he was enjoying by a false message, and descending into the courtyard of the Duke's hotel, he was assailed by a certain Chevalier de Rohan Chabot, of whom his satiric tongue had made an enemy. The chevalier had brought with him some hired bullies, armed with sticks, who fell upon Voltaire and beat him sorely. Burning with rage, the poet rushed back to the dining-room, and insisted that the Duke should avenge

the outrage inflicted on his guest. The Duke preferred to maintain a benevolent neutrality; whereupon Voltaire challenged his assailant, who immediately obtained an order for his committal to the Bastille. He remained a prisoner for six months, and was liberated only on condition that he quitted France.

Voltaire then repaired to England, where he spent a couple of years very pleasantly. At one time he lodged in Maiden Lane, Covent Garden; but the greater portion of the time he was the guest of Sir Everard Fawcner, at Wandswoth, to whom he dedicated his tragedy of "Zaire." For three months he was entertained by Lord Peterborough. And he might often be seen at my Lord Bolingbroke's rural retreat, Dawley Farm, where he and Pope and their host discussed politics, theology, and literature.

A year or two later, Pope, writing to Swift, speaks of a dinner at Dawley, which consisted only of "mutton-broth, beans and bacon, and a barn-door fowl." We may be sure, however, that Bolingbroke put no such rustic fare before the brilliant Frenchman, who discovered, during his residence among us, "that if we English had many religions, we had but one sauce." Since Voltaire's time the number of our sauces has happily increased—and so have our religions.

Not long after his return to France he withdrew to the country house of the Marquis du Châtelet, on the borders of Lorraine, together with his chère amie, the Marquise—a beautiful woman, of considerable intellectual gifts and many accomplishments; as spirituelle as a clever Frenchwoman almost always is, and quite able to hold her own in conversation even with Voltaire and his friends. Unlike most lettered ladies, she keenly relished the pleasures of social life—operas, balls, flirtations, dainty dinners, and even daintier suppers; and her name still lingers in the history of la cuisine, associated with "Blond de veau"—"Blond de veau à la Duchâtelet."

Writing to his friend, Saint Lambert, Voltaire says: "Come to Cirey, where our hostess will take care you are not poisoned. Not a spoonful of gravy remains in la cuisine—all is made into the blond de veau! We shall live a hundred years; we shall die no more." The recipe for this elixir-vitæ-like dish the Marquise had obtained from the celebrated physician, Tronchin.

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Here let me observe that the great Frederick, though so partial to the best of eating and drinking, contrived to keep the expenses of his kitchen within the sum of two thousand pounds per annum. "He examined every extraordinary item with a care which might be thought to suit the mistress of a boarding-house better than a great Prince. When more than four rix dollars were asked of him for a hundred oysters, he stormed as if he had heard that one of his generals had sold a fortress to the Empress Queen. Not a bottle of champagne was uncorked without his express permission."

It is a common error to suppose that a gourmand is necessarily a spendthrift, and that a love of good eating is synonymous with extravagance. This is by no means the case. The majority of *bons vivants*—of men who have really understood and

appreciated the mysteries of the higher cuisine—have also been men of moderate means, who have known how to gratify their refined tastes at a moderate cost.

After his quarrel with Frederick, Voltaire retired to the beautiful shores of Lake Lemane, where his dinner-table was frequented by guests few but fit. Goldsmith, in a charming passage, has described the old man of letters as he appeared in these delightful symposia. He remembers, he says, to have seen him in a select company of wits of both sexes, when the subject happened to turn upon English taste and learning. Fontenelle, who was of the party, was unacquainted with the language or authors of the country he undertook to condemn, but with a spirit truly vulgar, began to revile both. Diderot, who liked the English, and knew something of their literary pretensions, attempted to vindicate their poetry and learning, but with unequal abilities. The company quickly perceived that Fontenelle was superior in the dispute, and was surprised at the silence which Voltaire had preserved all the former part of the night, particularly as the conversation happened to turn on one of his favourite topics. Fontenelle continued his triumph till about twelve o'clock, when Voltaire appeared at last to awaken from his reverie. His whole frame seemed animated. "He began his defence with the utmost elegance, mixed with spirit, and now and then let fall the finest strokes of raillery upon his antagonist; and his harangue lasted till three in the morning. I must confess," says Goldsmith, "that, whether from national partiality or from the elegant sensibility of his manner, I never was so much charmed, nor did I ever remember so absolute a victory as he gained in this dispute."

To literature, Voltaire has contributed one immortal dinner—that in the romance of "Candide," in which all the dethroned Kings participate.

THE STORY OF A TUBER.

THE report of another failure, partial though it be, of the potato-crop in Ireland, once more concentrates public attention upon the useful tuber, which, during its three hundred years among us, has grown to be a necessary of life. The occasion seems apt for a review of the humble but

interesting history of our humble but indispensable friend.

We have said three hundred years, because the planting of the tuber by Clusius, in 1588, in the Botanical Gardens at Vienna, is often named as the introduction of the potato into Europe. As a matter of fact, however, this was not the first planting, for the Spaniards brought the real potato—*Solanum tuberosum*—home to Spain about 1580. From Spain it extended to Italy, and became at once a common a ticle of food there; from Spain it also extended to Belgium, and was being cultivated there, for it was from a Belgian that Clusius got the roots which he planted at Vienna in 1588.

Then, again, it has been said that Christopher Columbus was the first European who ever tasted a potato, and that was in 1492, when he reached Cuba. From Cuba he brought samples back with him to Genoa. This would make our history one hundred years older, only it so happens that the *Solanum tuberosum* is not a native of those parts, and could not have been at Cuba when Columbus was there. What he tasted and brought home was the *Convolvulus batatas*, or sweet potato, a very different article, although it gave its name, "batatas," to our tuber in the modified form of "potato."

The real potato is a native of Chili, and it has been proved to the satisfaction of naturalists that it did not exist in North America before the arrival of Europeans. How, then, could Sir John Hawkins bring it from Santa-Fé in 1565, or Sir Walter Raleigh from Virginia in 1584? Well, in the first place, it was the sweet potato that Sir John brought; and in the second place, before Sir Walter went to Virginia, the Spaniards had brought the real potato from some of their South American expeditions. In 1580 they sent it home, and there is evidence that by 1580 the *Solanum tuberosum* had been planted in North America. By the time Raleigh brought it to England, however, it was already a familiar root in Italy.

But did he bring it? There are some who say that it was Sir Francis Drake who brought the roots and presented them to Sir Walter Raleigh, who planted them on his estate near Cork in the year 1594. M'Calloch, however, says that 1610 was the year of the introduction into Ireland, and other writers say that Raleigh knew so little of the virtues of the plant he was naturalising that he caused the apples, not

the tubers, to be cooked and served upon his own table. Buckle, however, says that the common, or Virginian, potato was introduced by Raleigh in 1586. Lyte, who wrote in that year, does not mention the plant; but Gerard, who published the first edition of his "Herbal" in 1597, gave a portrait of himself with a potato in his hand.

Here, then, we have some negative certainties and some positive uncertainties. Columbus did not take the real potato to Genoa in 1492; Hawkins did not bring it to England in 1565. The Spaniards did take it to Spain in or about 1580; but whether Raleigh was the first to bring it to us, and in what year, remains open to doubt.

During the whole of the seventeenth century the potato was quite a rarity in this country, and up to 1684 was cultivated only in the gardens of the gentry. In Scotland it does not seem to have been grown at all, even in gardens, before 1728. Phillips, in the "History of Cultivated Vegetables," says that in 1619 the price in England was one shilling a pound. He further says that great prejudices existed against it, that it was alleged to be poisonous, and that in Burgundy the cultivation of it was prohibited.

These early prejudices against the potato are explainable on the supposition that the people did not know how to cook it, and possibly ate it raw, in which state it is certainly unwholesome, if not actually poisonous. Then, again, it belongs to a family of ill-repute—the *Solanaceæ*—of which the deadly nightshade and the mandrake are members, as well as more honoured specimens like the tomato, tobacco, datura, and cayenne-pepper, plants. The mandrake, of course, was a subject of ancient dislike, and perhaps it was natural for our superstitious progenitors to regard with suspicion any relative of that lugubrious root. Even the tempting appearance of the tomato did not suffice to win favour when first introduced into Europe, until somebody discovered that although undoubtedly sent by the infidels to poison the Christians, the Bon Dieu had interfered, and transformed it into an agreeable and wholesome fruit.

One meets with two references to the potato in Shakespeare, and these are said to be the earliest notices of it in English literature. Thus we have in "Troilus and Cressida": "The devil luxury, with his fat rump, and potato finger, tickles these

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Here let me observe that the great Frederick, though so partial to the best of eating and drinking, contrived to keep the expenses of his kitchen within the sum of two thousand pounds per annum. "He examined every extraordinary item with a care which might be thought to suit the mistress of a boarding-house better than a great Prince. When more than four rix dollars were asked of him for a hundred oysters, he stormed as if he had heard that one of his generals had sold a fortress to the Empress Queen. Not a bottle of champagne was uncorked without his express permission."

It is a common error to suppose that a gourmand is necessarily a spendthrift, and that a love of good eating is synonymous with extravagance. This is by no means the case. The majority of *bons vivants*—of men who have really understood and

appreciated the mysteries of the higher cuisine—have also been men of moderate means, who have known how to gratify their refined tastes at a moderate cost.

After his quarrel with Frederick, Voltaire retired to the beautiful shores of Lake Leman, where his dinner-table was frequented by guests few but fit. Goldsmith, in a charming passage, has described the old man of letters as he appeared in these delightful symposia. He remembers, he says, to have seen him in a select company of wits of both sexes, when the subject happened to turn upon English taste and learning. Fontenelle, who was of the party, was unacquainted with the language or authors of the country he undertook to condemn, but with a spirit truly vulgar, began to revile both. Diderot, who liked the English, and knew something of their literary pretensions, attempted to vindicate their poetry and learning, but with unequal abilities. The company quickly perceived that Fontenelle was superior in the dispute, and was surprised at the silence which Voltaire had preserved all the former part of the night, particularly as the conversation happened to turn on one of his favourite topics. Fontenelle continued his triumph till about twelve o'clock, when Voltaire appeared at last to awaken from his reverie. His whole frame seemed animated. "He began his defence with the utmost elegance, mixed with spirit, and now and then let fall the finest strokes of railery upon his antagonist; and his harangue lasted till three in the morning. I must confess," says Goldsmith, "that, whether from national partiality or from the elegant sensibility of his manner, I never was so much charmed, nor did I ever remember so absolute a victory as he gained in this dispute."

To literature, Voltaire has contributed one immortal dinner—that in the romance of "Candide," in which all the dethroned Kings participate.

THE STORY OF A TUBER.

THE report of another failure, partial though it be, of the potato-crop in Ireland, once more concentrates public attention upon the useful tuber, which, during its three hundred years among us, has grown to be a necessary of life. The occasion seems apt for a review of the humble but

interesting history of our humble but indispensable friend.

We have said three hundred years, because the planting of the tuber by Clusius, in 1588, in the Botanical Gardens at Vienna, is often named as the introduction of the potato into Europe. As a matter of fact, however, this was not the first planting, for the Spaniards brought the real potato—*Solanum tuberosum*—home to Spain about 1580. From Spain it extended to Italy, and became at once a common article of food there; from Spain it also extended to Belgium, and was being cultivated there, for it was from a Belgian that Clusius got the roots which he planted at Vienna in 1588.

Then, again, it has been said that Christopher Columbus was the first European who ever tasted a potato, and that was in 1492, when he reached Cuba. From Cuba he brought samples back with him to Genoa. This would make our history one hundred years older, only it so happens that the *Solanum tuberosum* is not a native of those parts, and could not have been at Cuba when Columbus was there. What he tasted and brought home was the *Convolvulus batatas*, or sweet potato, a very different article, although it gave its name, "batatas," to our tuber in the modified form of "potato."

The real potato is a native of Chili, and it has been proved to the satisfaction of naturalists that it did not exist in North America before the arrival of Europeans. How, then, could Sir John Hawkins bring it from Santa-Fé in 1565, or Sir Walter Raleigh from Virginia in 1584? Well, in the first place, it was the sweet potato that Sir John brought; and in the second place, before Sir Walter went to Virginia, the Spaniards had brought the real potato from some of their South American expeditions. In 1580 they sent it home, and there is evidence that by 1580 the *Solanum tuberosum* had been planted in North America. By the time Raleigh brought it to England, however, it was already a familiar root in Italy.

But did he bring it? There are some who say that it was Sir Francis Drake who brought the roots and presented them to Sir Walter Raleigh, who planted them on his estate near Cork in the year 1594. McCulloch, however, says that 1610 was the year of the introduction into Ireland, and other writers say that Raleigh knew so little of the virtues of the plant he was naturalising that he caused the apples, not

the tubers, to be cooked and served upon his own table. Buckle, however, says that the common, or Virginian, potato was introduced by Raleigh in 1586. Lyte, who wrote in that year, does not mention the plant; but Gerard, who published the first edition of his "Herbal" in 1597, gave a portrait of himself with a potato in his hand.

Here, then, we have some negative certainties and some positive uncertainties. Columbus did not take the real potato to Genoa in 1492; Hawkins did not bring it to England in 1565. The Spaniards did take it to Spain in or about 1580; but whether Raleigh was the first to bring it to us, and in what year, remains open to doubt.

During the whole of the seventeenth century the potato was quite a rarity in this country, and up to 1684 was cultivated only in the gardens of the gentry. In Scotland it does not seem to have been grown at all, even in gardens, before 1728. Phillips, in the "History of Cultivated Vegetables," says that in 1619 the price in England was one shilling a pound. He further says that great prejudices existed against it, that it was alleged to be poisonous, and that in Burgundy the cultivation of it was prohibited.

These early prejudices against the potato are explainable on the supposition that the people did not know how to cook it, and possibly ate it raw, in which state it is certainly unwholesome, if not actually poisonous. Then, again, it belongs to a family of ill-repute—the *Solanaceæ*—of which the deadly nightshade and the mandrake are members, as well as more honoured specimens like the tomato, tobacco, datura, and cayenne-pepper, plants. The mandrake, of course, was a subject of ancient dislike, and perhaps it was natural for our superstitious progenitors to regard with suspicion any relative of that lugubrious root. Even the tempting appearance of the tomato did not suffice to win favour when first introduced into Europe, until somebody discovered that although undoubtedly sent by the infidels to poison the Christians, the Bon Dieu had interfered, and transformed it into an agreeable and wholesome fruit.

One meets with two references to the potato in Shakespeare, and these are said to be the earliest notices of it in English literature. Thus we have in "Troilus and Cressida": "The devil luxury, with his fat rump, and potato finger, tickles these

together!" In the "Merry Wives," Falstaff says: "Let the sky rain potatoes; let it thunder to the tune of green-sleeves; hail kissing-comfits, and snow Eringoes." There are several references in the early dramatists, which the curious reader may find collected in a note in Steevens' "Shakespeare," but which hardly serve our purpose. There is one reference, however, by Waller, which is interesting:

With candy'd plantains and the juicy pine,
On choicest melons and sweet grapes they dine,
And with potatoes fat their wanton kine,

because, prior to 1688, it seems to be the case that the Italian peasants used the potato as food for their pigs as well as for themselves.

We are constrained, however, to conclude that Shakespeare and the old dramatists referred to the sweet potato, sometimes called the Spanish potato. "Eringoes," mentioned by Falstaff, were candied roots, and Eringo was also the name of contempt applied by the Spaniards to all foreigners, but especially Englishmen. The word would seem to have been imported by the gentlemen-adventurers from the Spanish Main, in the time of good Queen Bess. Now, if we take "candied roots" in association with "kissing-comfit-," we are compelled to conclude that Falstaff's potato was the batatas, the sweet, fleshy roots of which were described by Columbus to be "not unlike chestnuts in taste."

Certain it is that the potato was not regarded in this country as an object of national importance until 1662, when the Royal Society advised it to be planted. In the history of the Society there is the record of a recommendation of a committee, dated 1662, urging all the Fellows who possessed land, to plant potatoes, and persuade their friends to do the same, "in order to alleviate the distress that would accompany a scarcity of food."

In Scotland, the first mention of the potato occurs in the household-book of the Duchess of Buccleuch and Monmouth. From Chambers's "Traditions of Edinburgh," we gather that the price in 1701 was half-a-crown a peck. Robertson, of Irvine, had discovered what he thought the earliest evidence of potatoes in Scotland in the household-book of the Eglinton family. The date of this entry, however, was 1733; and Robert Chambers showed that the date in the Buccleuch book was thirty-two years earlier.

Further information is given by the

Duke of Argyle in "Scotland As It Was, and As It Is." There we learn that, until long past the middle of the eighteenth century, little or nothing was known of the potato in Scotland, although in after years it brought about the most prodigious effects on population. The Celts of Ireland first began to use it as an adjunct, and then as a main article of food. From them it passed over to the Celts of the Hebrides, and was introduced into South Uist by Macdonald of Clanronald in 1743. The Highlanders, always suspicious of novelties, resisted the use of it for some years; and the neighbouring island of Bernera was not reached until 1752. It was soon found, however, that the tuber would grow luxuriantly almost anywhere—even on sand, and shingle, and bogs. It was quickly planted in those patches of ditched-off land known in the Highlands as "lazy-beds"—a not inappropriate term, which in Ireland is applied to patches of potatoes not sown in drills. In Ireland and in the Highlands the potato quickly came to be the main food of the people during the greater portion of the year; but in the Lowlands of Scotland, and the rural districts of England, it was only used as a food accessory, and it became an important article of commerce. It has often happened that the potato crops have realised higher prices than any other product of the farm.

It has been sometimes stated that the man who planted the first field of potatoes in Scotland died within the last forty years. This is an error. The first field planted in the Lowlands was at Liberton Muir, about the year 1738, by a farmer named Mutter, who died in 1808. An attempt had been made some years earlier by a farm-labourer, named Prentice, near Kilayth, but not as a farming operation.

In either case we do not get farther back than about 1730 for potato-planting in Scotland, whereas in England, by 1684, the recommendations of the Royal Society had been largely adopted, especially in Lancashire, where the first serious beginning seems to have been made. On the other hand, the cultivation has not extended so rapidly in England as in either Ireland or Scotland. The annual crop of Ireland is estimated as, on the average, equal to about one thousand three hundred and twenty pounds per inhabitant; that of Scotland, about three hundred and ninety pounds; and that of England, about one hundred and twenty pounds. Germany

is the next largest producer to Ireland, and also the next largest consumer—the crops being equal to about one thousand and sixty pounds per head. Holland and Belgium each produce about five hundred and eighty pounds, and France about five hundred and fifty pounds, of potatoes per inhabitant per annum. It is curious that, although Spain and Italy were the first cultivators and users in Europe, the product of each of these countries is now only about fifty-five pounds per head.

The annual value of the entire potato crop of Europe may be stated at one hundred and sixty millions sterling; and that of the United Kingdom at about one-tenth of that total. That of North America is about twenty million pounds sterling more; and it is a curious instance of the vagaries of time that the *Solanum tuberosum* is now known in America as the "Irish potato," to distinguish it from the batatas, or sweet potato.

All this immense development of cultivation does not complete the topographical record of our tuber. It has been introduced into India, and is now successfully cultivated both in Bengal and in the Madras Presidency. It has found a home in the Dutch East Indies and in China; and its tastes and habits are affectionately studied in Australia. But as in the tropics it has to be grown at an altitude of three thousand feet, or more, above sea-level, it can never become so common in hot countries as in Europe.

It is not only as a food-plant that the potato has secured the respect of mankind. Starch is made from it both for the laundry and for the manufacture of farina, dextrin, etc. The dried pulp from which the starch has been extracted is used for making boxes. From the stem and leaves an extract is made of a narcotic, used to allay pain in coughs and other ailments. In a raw state the potato is used as a cooling application for burns and sores. A spirit is distilled from the tuber, which in Norway is called brandy, and in other places is used for mixing with malt and vine liquors. Many of the farinaceous preparations now so popular in the nursery and sick-room are made largely of potato-starch; and in some places cakes and puddings are made from potato-flour.

To the potato are also ascribed properties of another kind. The folklore of the plant is meagre, considering its wide distribution, but there are a number of curious superstitions connected with it. In some parts

there is a belief that it thrives best if planted on Maundy Thursday; in others, that if planted under certain stars it will become watery. Mr. Hilderic Friend says that in Devonshire the people believe that the potato is a certain cure for the toothache—not taken internally, but carried about in the pocket. Mr. Thistleton Dyer mentions it as a reputed cure for rheumatism in the same way; only we believe that in order to be an effective cure in such cases the potato ought to be stolen. Mr. Andrew Lang mentions an instance of faith in the practice of this cure, which he came across in a London drawing-room. He regards this belief as a survival of the old superstitions about mandrake, and as analogous to the habit of African tribes who wear roots round the neck as protection against wild animals.

The value of the potato as food has been much discussed; but it seems to rank next to the plantain, and a long way behind either rice or wheat. The author of the "Chemistry of Common Life" has pointed to the remarkable physiological likeness of tribes of people who live chiefly on rice, plantain, and potato. The Hindu, the negro, and the Irishman are all remarkable for being round-bellied, and this peculiarity is ascribed to the necessity of consuming a large bulk of food in order to obtain the requisite nourishment.

It is not the root of the plant which we consume. The tubers known to the table are the swollen portions of the underground branches, and the so-called "eyes" are really leaf-buds. It is by cuttings from these tubers, however, that the plant is mostly propagated. About three-fourths of the weight of the potato is water, and this may explain the injurious effect which excessive rainfall has on the crops. The disease which attacks the plant, and has been the cause of Irish famines, past and prospective, is a species of fungus, which first attacks and discolours the shoots, and then spreads downwards to the tubers, increasing the quantity of water in them, reducing the quantity of starch, and converting the albumen into casein.

When this disease once appears it is apt to spread over wide areas where the same climatic influences prevail, and when the disease appears in any strength the crops are rapidly rendered unfit for human food. The trouble of the Irish peasantry of the West is that they have no alternative crop to fall back on when the potato fails. Their plots are too small for cereals, and they

cannot be persuaded to cultivate cabbages and other vegetables along with their tubers. It is thus that, when the day of tribulation comes, the potato appears to be really a curse rather than a blessing to agricultural Ireland.

There has been talk from time to time of reverting to original types—that is to say, of obtaining a fresh supply of the indigenous plant from South America, and breeding a new stock, as it were. No important steps have been taken in this direction; but it is a possible mode of extirpating the disease which may be some day resorted to.

The Irish famine of 1847 was due to the failure of the potato crops in 1846, preceded by two or three years of bad crops. This failure was due to disease, and the eating of the diseased tuber brought on a pestilence, so that altogether the deaths by starvation and epidemics in that disastrous period amounted to nearly a million and a quarter persons. To deal with the distress, various sums were voted by Parliament to the total amount of over ten millions sterling. This was supplemented by private philanthropy in this country, and by generous aid from the United States and some European countries. What was the actual money cost to the world at large of the failure of the Irish potato crop in 1846 can never be accurately known; but the amount was so enormous as to create a serious economic problem in connection with the homely tuber.

There have been several partial failures since in Ireland—although nothing so extensive as that of 1846—and in 1872 the disease was very bad in England. In that year, indeed, the importation of foreign potatoes rose to the enormous value of one million six hundred and fifty-four thousand pounds to supply our own deficient crops. In 1876, again, there was great excitement and alarm about the "Colorado beetle," an importation from America, which was destined, it was said, to destroy all our potato-fields. But the beetle proved comparatively harmless, and seems now to have disappeared from these shores.

The area under potatoes seems to steadily increase all over the kingdom. In 1889 there were about one million four hundred thousand acres set apart for this cultivation. The yield of tubers per acre varies very much, according to soil, weather, kind of plant, and so on. It has been as high as ten, and as low as two,

tons per acre; but in ordinary farming districts six tons per acre is considered a good average. On this basis the yield of the potato-crops of the kingdom should be somewhere about eight million tons, and if we take an average of two pounds per ton, we shall find the total value, as already mentioned, about sixteen millions sterling per annum. In the present year the total will be considerably less, owing to the failure of the crops in the West of Ireland, and in some other limited areas.

The Englishman and Scotchman cannot do without his potato as an adjunct; but the error of the Irishman is in making it the mainstay of his life. The words of Malthus in this connection put the matter in a nutshell, much as he has been abused for his theory of the effects of the potato on population: "When the common people of a country," he says, "live principally upon the dearest grain, as they do in England on wheat, they have great resources in a scarcity, and barley, oats, rice, cheap soups, and potatoes all present themselves as less expensive, yet, at the same time, wholesome means of nourishment; but when their habitual food is the lowest in this scale, they appear to be absolutely without resource, except in the bark of trees—like the poor Swedes—and a great portion of them must necessarily be starved."

ON LOVING ONE'S SELF.

UP to a certain point, the more a man loves himself the better citizen of the world he will probably become. Children ought not to be conscious of self-love, like grown-up people. As a rule, they are not. All the same, they are mightily aggrieved when anything happens to cheat them of their expectations. It is only in story-books that one meets with the meek, self-sacrificing child, to whom it is all one whether or not he has his share of cake and sugar-plums, and who willingly offers his right cheek to his nurse to be slapped when his left cheek has borne its fair proportion of punishment. Such a child has, no doubt, the making of a saint in him, if he has, at the same time, the bodily stuff to bring him to manhood. One likes far better to see the eyes of the youngsters brighten with eager desire when there is a prospect of something good. Time enough by-and-by for them to gag their innocent appetites.

Self-love is, indeed, an instinct as important as are senses of sight, hearing, and so on. It is the mother of a multitude of good deeds. Where would be the virtuousness of your conduct in giving up half of what you possessed for the sick and poor of the parish if you hated yourself so intensely that it had become a pleasure to run counter to your natural wishes and welfare? To my mind, in such an event, you would show just as much positive naughtiness as if you had acted from spite against your neighbour. A little analysis and inspection of your state of mind after so laudable an action—as the blind old world might reckon it—would convince you that you were wrong somewhere. How edifying to feel in the mood to say to yourself: "There, monster! You may make what you can of that blow in the face. I'll torture you a little more by-and-by; indeed, I'll continue to subject you to privations just as long as there's any life in you, I do so hate you!" And yet this is the goal towards which an incredible number of our misguided moralists and preachers are for ever urging those who take their words for gospel!

Why, it is only necessary to refer to the Church's catechism to perceive that there is error somewhere: either in the catechism itself, or in the interpretation put upon Scripture by the preachers who insist so strongly upon their doctrine. "My duty towards my neighbour is to love him as myself." What can be clearer? If, then, I hate myself, does it not seem that it is, therefore, my duty to hate my dear neighbour also? However, it is really the self-love that is taken for granted, and the love of neighbour that is to be built upon it.

Of course, no one, of even average intelligence, can suppose that we should do well to make as much of ourselves as if we were children, to be won only by coaxing and license. In the old days of savagedom, the primeval instinct did assert itself with precious little restraint. It was sufficient justification for the naked barbarians of thousands of years ago—and a good deal less—in their committal of what we should view as most detestable offences against humanity and right reason, if they did but say to themselves, "I wanted to do so and so." If they were potent enough to achieve their wishes, well and good. There the matter might end: they were satisfied. Their neighbours' suffering in the fulfilment of these desires was of no account; though, to be sure, the chance of

revenge for such suffering had to be borne in mind. There was no ethical bar before which they might have been arraigned and condemned.

Have you ever thought how largely our self-love depends upon the love of others for ourselves? Robinson Crusoe, until he chanced upon black Friday, must have begun almost genuinely to hate himself. What evidence had he—except his innate conviction, which would probably weaken daily for lack of confirmation—that he was really a lovable being? I have little doubt, that had he stayed in solitude much longer, he would have put an end to himself or gone mad. But the merciful advent of Friday restored to him the very precious assurance that he was a man like other men, and that he was possessed of lovable parts.

Our sisters feel this even more than we do. In girlhood, it is not difficult to get an exaggerated idea of one's lovableness. There is a conspiracy to raise one's opinion of one's self inordinately. A pretty face attracts affection as surely as a magnet attracts steel. The result is, in a multitude of cases, that this show of love in others tends to increase prodigiously our inborn affection for ourselves. Herein we have an explanation—though truly none is needed—of those words of Marlowe,

Maids are nothing then,
Without the sweet society of men.

It is in the eyes of mankind that maidens realise most thoroughly their lovableness. Without men, they would be led to depreciate themselves; for the love of one maid for another is less lively in kind than that of the strong sex for the weak. To borrow from Marlowe once again:

Lone women, like to empty houses, perish.

They don't fall to pieces in material dissolution; but their hearts chill until they have so low, so humble an opinion of themselves that they may be said to have perished out of the rank of human beings vigorously operative upon each other. You see it in the comportment of those who are called "old maids." They affirm—perhaps without reason—that nobody loves them. What matters it, then, how they dress, or behave, or look in the eyes of the world? They think they have lost all hope of that fine stimulus towards self-love and noble living—the love of others.

Goodness knows, we require no especial teaching to make us realise that we are not

to have our own way in all the walks of life. The jar of circumstances and the conduct of others are pretty sure, sooner or later, to tone down the extravagance of the self-love which in some of us holds out several years after we are mature human beings. Is it not, then, brutally unneedful to go to and fro denouncing love of self as if it were a monster vice injurious to the community? When we are crushed to the ground by humiliation or misfortune, it is not an act of benevolence to drive a steam-roller over us. Hope is, in fact, as certain a comrade of self-love as despair of self-hate. The world has agreed that without a constant supply of hope, man has but a sorry time of it. Shall he, then, be forced to take up with despair for the rest of his days? That is what it amounts to. If you go from house to house, insisting eloquently that it is the bounden duty of every one to hate himself, you may be responsible for a long trail of crimes, murder included; and logically you would deserve hanging. There are plenty of religious dismalists—as I propose to call them—still abroad in the world. They may be conscientious, but they are certainly most rash and imprudent. By reiterating their belief about the badness of human nature, and the vileness of men and women, they do their best to weaken the citadel of conscience, which would else make a stout stand, even against these wiles of the evil one, which are esteemed the hardest to resist. Your self-hater—if he be true to his silly convictions—may be excused for shunning “the immoral influences of gladness” as far as he himself is concerned; but he ought rather to be confined in Colney Hatch than allowed to spread the infection of his own mind among others to whom reasonable self-love is both the strength and light of life itself.

Some time ago I glanced at a daily newspaper, and read the account of one of the many domestic tragedies which spring from loss of that very self-love or self-regard which some of our friends think it so desirable to obliterate. The incidents were trivial. A maid-servant—she was but a kitchen-maid, and yet she was as sensitive, at least, as you or I—had, for a number of months, had a lover, who was a brewer’s apprentice. Suddenly the youth turned his back on her. He cut the girl whom he had been wont to escort into the twilight lanes of the neighbourhood, her arm within his, and her heart almost beating in unison with his. The poor

little kitchen-maid felt this cruel slight so terribly, that she bought poison, and took it; from which she died. Before doing this, however, she wrote a letter to the man, saying how little she cared for her life, since he had made it so plain that he cared nothing more for her. She could not endure the loss of his love, which had made life dear to her.

The doctrine of self-hate would eventuate somewhat similarly. It would, if it were consistently acted upon, usher in a startling era of annihilation. How could men and women marry if they loathed themselves? Why, it would be maddening in such a case to see one’s reflection in the eyes of a wife twenty times a day. Still more maddening to have, ever in front of one, a number of children well adapted to perpetuate one’s likeness for an indefinite term of years. No; marriage would have to become an obsolete institution. We should all have to take very much to heart the bidding of the pessimists—forbear matrimony for our own, the world’s, and our possible children’s sake. It would behove us to put our heads in sacks, and either starve or drown ourselves by solemn unanimous compact.

Courage, heroism, and sundry other attributes which, nowadays, are commonly esteemed very praiseworthy in a man, would, in such an age, have to be viewed very differently. The more a man loves his life or himself, the greater the virtue he shows in risking his life for the good of others. I, for one, should feel much more grateful to a rescuer who confessed that, in risking his life for mine, he was putting a good deal at hazard, than to a person who thus acted involuntarily, admitting that he cared little whether he lived or died, and who, consequently, was very indifferent whether he succeeded or failed in saving my life.

Alfieri’s opinion of the profit of self-love to individuals and the world may well be repeated: “This precious gift,” he calls it, “is the chief motive of all the great actions of man, when he unites to a knowledge of his own powers an enlightened enthusiasm for the sublime and the beautiful; which are, in fact, only one and the same thing.”

Is it not obvious? Do you think that any man would put his heart into the work that was before him, unless he valued himself sufficiently to think well of the fame that might accrue to him from a creditable achievement of his work? Of

what use would fame, and the gaze of the world, be to the man who hated himself? Why, it would be torture, not pleasure—like making a man stand, open-eyed, in the Sahara at noon, with his face towards the scorching sun overhead.

It need hardly be said, however, that it is very possible to love one's self a little too much. Self-love in moderation is like exercise in moderation. But when it ends in an idolisation of self, which makes it impossible to spare any love for one's neighbour—why, of course, then it is a most disagreeable vice. In youth we are apt to have just a little too good an opinion of ourselves. But it is better, perhaps, to err on that side than on the other. The world will soon rectify our judgement in this particular. It is little likely, however, to help the youth who—poor fellow!—can see nothing of brightness and attraction in himself. He may go to a monastery, and there seek the consolations of as much contentment as it will ever be his lot to enjoy; or he may tread the paths of subjective literature, and find his chief diversion in a careful analysis of the degradation of human nature as discerned in that microcosm—himself.

The flagellants and others of the Middle Ages had, one might imagine, a very low opinion of themselves. Low or not, it was very unpleasant in its effects. They wished themselves to be better than they were. So far, well and good. We all have the same aspirations. But did they swing their scourges as a means of self-improvement, or merely to punish themselves for the offences, real or fanciful, by the committal of which they were abased in their own esteem? In either case they aimed at the like result—to make themselves more respectable, more lovable. They were out of humour with themselves because of the sins which were a drag upon the potentiality of their affection.

It is the same with many who put an end to themselves. These may profess that they hate themselves so profoundly that they can no longer tolerate the burden of living in their own company. Really, however, they misinterpret themselves very strangely. It is not that they hate themselves: they yearn rather to be fitter subjects of self-love than they see any rational hope of ever becoming. It is from excess of self-love, from unsatisfied self-love, that they commit suicide. Else they would be too indifferent to those

slights and blows from the world which to the common eye seem the chief causes of their crime. The man who hates himself ought to rejoice in anything that annoys him; the trials of life ought to give him a grim, keen pleasure, which would effectually deter him from self-slaughter.

Self-love is really one of the most civilising and ennobling instincts with which we are blessed. But for it, our legislators would have a hard task to devise restrictions strong enough for the many evil inclinations of our human nature. Is it fear of the consequences to our liberty or our pocket that keeps us from the committal of a number of the offences in the statute book? To some extent, no doubt; but I fancy the fear of losing our own self-esteem, or the regard of others, which is a kindred sentiment, is a far stronger deterrent. Like Tony Lumpkin in the play, we could endure well enough the suffering that might accrue to others from our misdeeds; but we cannot abide doing that which may lower us in our own and the world's estimation. If we were innately better than we are, we should be influenced by somewhat nobler motives of conduct than this. But it is no use kicking against the pricks; in other words, complaining that we are not made differently. It may well suffice for us that we have so admirable a sheet-anchor of rectitude as this sentiment or passion of self-love.

THE TREVERTON MARRIAGE.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

CHAPTER III.

BEATRIX was very angry when the parcel of books arrived; but she had not much time to think about them, or even to do more than just open the parcel. One peep she must have taken, for it would not do to be wondering all the morning what they could be when her whole mind should be given to proof-correcting, and finishing a newspaper article. They looked very tempting—there were poetry, travels, and two novels, all brand-new. Still it was tiresome, and she did not know what must be done with them.

In the afternoon she took her parcel of manuscripts and proofs to Monkchester post office, and received there some letters and some copies of a paper containing one

of her articles, addressed to her as "Miss Laura Tigar." She could not resist the temptation of reading her letters coming along the Monkchester road, and was so absorbed in them that she nearly ran against Mrs. Dudley, and in the sudden pulling-up she dropped an envelope close to Mrs. Dudley's foot.

Mrs. Dudley stooped to pick it up, glanced at it sharply, took in the address, and handed it to Miss Lyon.

"It is a man's hand, and addressed to her under a different name at Monkchester post office," she commented, inwardly; but she said, with a smile: "It must be a very interesting letter."

Beatrix blushed, conscious that Mrs. Dudley spoke quite truly, and said:

"It was very stupid of me not to look where I was going."

"You are going to Heather Cottage, are you not?" asked Mrs. Dudley, committing herself recklessly, in her hurry to find out why Beatrix had her letters addressed to the post office. "I was coming to call upon you—you are a parishioner, for the present, of course."

"Thank you," said Beatrix, coldly, mindful of having been neglected a long time; then becoming mindful, too, of business and her need of characters, she said: "I shall be glad to see you. Do come soon."

"I would walk back with you now," said Mrs. Dudley, regretfully; "but I must get a prescription made up at Riddell's for Mr. Dudley's rheumatism. I will call on my way home; you will be in then, so that will do very well. I might miss you another day."

Beatrix walked on, feeling very pleased that a model was going to sit to her so soon. She had just been thinking despairfully that she must give up her idea of a Jane Austen novel, and was meditating an historical romance, the scene to be laid at Oswaldburn, which was very full of historical associations. There had been a fierce battle on the opposite hill between King Oswald and the heathen; in later days the country houses round had been each a centre of Jacobite plotting. The Chase itself had been heroically defended against Oliver Cromwell, who had knocked Monkchester Abbey to pieces. Then the very name of Monkchester brought back the days of Roman sovereignty; and there was the long broken line of Adrian's wall, and the Roman road that crossed the moor. Why, the great fault

of the place was—there was too much historical material. It required as much time and care to select the best period as to sketch the plot.

"Historical novels sell badly," thought Beatrix; "but after all, one must write as one can, and use the material that comes to hand. I won't have Oliver Cromwell or the Jacobites—they have been done to death; I will study the Romans."

She walked along the road after meeting Mrs. Dudley, her mind tossed about between the historical and the characteristic. One character does not make a novel any more than one swallow makes a summer. Mrs. Dudley might end with her call, or even with her promise upon the road. If she only knew the Trevertons well enough to be permitted to inspect the Roman camp in the Chase! Sir Everard was a scholar—what a guide he would be! Miss Treverton was disagreeable, certainly; but one must put up with certain disagreeables for the sake of art. Sir Everard meant and wished to be friendly. She would write a nice note to thank him for the books, and ask if she might be allowed to visit his Roman camp.

When she went into her drawing-room, the open book-parcel was the first thing to meet her eye. Tea waiting on a little bamboo table in the window was the second. She was tired with her walk; she sat down to the tea-table, and drew the books close to her. She took up the first—the newest poetry. She laid it aside, and took the next; she cared nothing for love, or for sweetness that was cloying as the scent of attar of roses, and the taste of honey. Love she must have in her novel; but there could be nothing in the iron hearts of her mighty Romans corresponding to the luscious dreams of Eastern rose-gardens. She had always despised the necessary element of love, as an honest politician despises the tricks of electioneering. Her heroes and heroines had always married each other from motives that seemed to her much higher than love, or from very low motives, such as self-interest, or under pressure from without.

The next book she took up was a novel—all about love. She skimmed contemptuously through it.

"The stalest of all subjects," she said to herself. "What is there new to say about it? Yet it pays, this nineteenth century love—which is either a weak thing, stifled in the prose of life, or a wicked thing, if strong,

to break the barriers of prose, of commonplace, and even of morality. Now, when the world was young one can imagine how vigorous it must have been. Men and women cared nothing what they paid for it; it was like the pearl of great price to them, for which the merchant sold all he possessed that he might buy it."

She sat with the volume lying on her knee, and gazed dreamily over the purple moor, planning her Roman novel, when the click of the garden gate caused her to turn her head suddenly. To her surprise—to her vexation the next moment—she saw Sir Everard. Her third thought was:

"I will ask him if I may see over the Chase camp."

"She is certainly plain," Sir Everard thought, when he saw her lying back in her chair; in spite of her large, dreamy eyes, the statuesque repose of her attitude, her white, well-shaped hands lying straight and restfully along the arms of her chair, the straight, still folds of her thin black dress.

He was reluctant to disturb that perfect stillness.

Then he saw her face light with pleasure at seeing him, and new beauties came to every feature, and every line and curve of her, as expression chased expression over her, like the clouds racing over a hill. As she had seen him, and looked so expectant, and as the window opened straight into the garden, he did not go through the ceremony of ringing and enquiring at the door, but came straight to her. One of his books slipped from her knee as she rose to receive him. She put out her left hand to stop its fall, and gave him her right. It all was so pleasant and informal; he felt himself placed on the footing of an old friend at once.

He was very handsome, and his manners, though simple, and perfectly free from self-consciousness, were those of a very highly bred man. The charm about him fascinated Beatrix at once. Perhaps the most patent part of the charm was the extremely interested expression in his blue eyes, the deferential interest in her that every tone and gesture displayed. The courtliness, that gave high polish to it all, soothed her indescribably; the natural refinement in her found its need satisfied. She had not seen many gentlemen in her life; her father was a gentleman by birth, of the middle class by education, and poverty and disappointment had made a

peevish tyrant of him. The men of Wellingby whom she knew were sometimes pleasant, and occasionally had had some education; but they were made of quite other clay from this handsome, low-voiced baronet. He discussed the books he had sent, and opened out new visions before her of realms of whose existence she had barely known, and consequently had believed to be unworthy of knowing. She had had such a hard, busy life; there had been neither time nor room in it for beauty. She had never read for pleasure—always for study. It had been such a hand to hand fight for existence; all work and no play. It was quite a new, refreshing sensation to talk about books to a man who did not know she wrote herself, and keep alluding to her work. She would not even have asked for permission to see over the Roman camp—it was so pleasant to have escaped so completely from workaday associations—had he not himself introduced the subject. Leaving the subject of books, he began to discuss the neighbourhood, and of course the Roman wall came forward at once, and then he told her of the camp that had been dug out of his park. He described it in such vivid words, with such ardent love and pride, that all her longing came back to write it into romance. Only she felt timid now about asking to see it. Until now, she had felt no more shyness at asking to see over houses and to inspect milliners' show-rooms for "Ladies' Letters" than an American interviewer feels at forcing himself upon a prince or a great singer.

"Now," she thought, "he will think me objectionably learned. I dare not tell him I want to make a novel out of it."

For had he not said, in turning over the novel she had been glancing through, that he never looked at women's novels?

After this, how dared she own to belonging to that army of authors, though her aim had been only the inglorious one of making a living for herself? But a *dea ex machina* came most appositely upon the scene, though, like many beneficent divinities, she was taken at first for an intruder and a marplot.

Sir Everard was calling Miss Lyon's attention to a passage in "Sadi in the Garden," and she was listening so attentively, her head turned from the window to him, that she did not see Mrs. Dudley walk through the gate left open by Sir Everard. The door bell startled her

attention aside for the moment; it was doubtless a parcel or a tramp. Then the drawing-room door opened, and in walked Mrs. Dudley.

Had she found a lion playing with a lamb on Mrs. Slater's treasured carpet, or fire-charred ruins of furniture, or her temporary parishioner making confession of her sins to her own evangelical husband, she could not have been more astounded, and looked more scared, more like running away, than when she found the great Sir Everard Treverton, who never made a call except upon the greatest county people and one or two favoured old tenants, reading poetry to this girl, who was nobody-knew-who, and came from nobody-knew-where. They seemed like very old friends; but surely that could not be the case, since she knew for a fact that Miss Treverton had not known of Miss Lyon's existence two days ago. Something must be wrong, since it could not be understood at once. Mysteries were always more or less wrong.

It certainly was an awkward situation. She herself was unnerved by the grandeur of Sir Everard's presence, letting alone her suspicions and curiosity. Beatrix saw in her an unwelcome messenger, recalling her to the path of duty and work—away from the soft, novel entertainment of Eastern rose-gardens and romance of ancient days to the prose of every-day life. Sir Everard saw his pleasant visit cut short, and was guiltily aware that there was food for gossip to be found in his presence in Miss Lyon's drawing-room. Miss Lyon herself was perfectly innocent of sharing that guilty consciousness. Sir Everard was an old gentleman who had been kind to her as to a tenant, and who would be kinder still if she dared show him how.

"How delightfully fresh it feels after the thunderstorm," Mrs. Dudley began, in true British fashion—what a help the varieties in our English weather are to us all now and then! "I hope you were not caught in the storm, Miss Lyon. You take such very long walks, do you not?"

"No; I was at home," and Beatrix coloured a little.

"Fortunately for us," said Sir Everard, "my daughter and I were caught in the rain, and Miss Lyon, like a good Samaritan, took us in and sheltered us."

He meant thus to account for his present call as being a thank-offering; but Mrs. Dudley said to herself:

"Oh, then they did not meet till Tuesday, and he is improving the acquaintance—at a pretty rapid rate, I must say; and Miss Treverton has not come with him, which looks bad"—for Beatrix, she meant.

"There are very pleasant walks about here," she said. "Of course you have seen our Roman remains, that we are all so proud of?"

"You have not seen my Roman remains, I think, Miss Lyon," Sir Everard put in, quickly. "You cannot be allowed to leave the neighbourhood without visiting them."

Beatrix flushed quite red in her consciousness of wanting so very much to see them for reasons of her own. Mrs. Dudley noted the blush and was puzzled, almost startled. Sir Everard saw it, and saw in it unwillingness to visit the Chase as a mere tourist, and annoyance that she could not visit it in any other way, since Miss Treverton had not called upon her. He said hastily, in his anxiety to remove the pain she might be feeling, without pause to consider practicabilities:

"We must have a picnic there—not a regular picnic, but, say, an *al fresco* tea. I will talk it over with my daughter—she was obliged to visit an old friend at a distance to-day—and when we have fixed the day you shall be properly informed. You will persuade Miss Lyon to come with you, will you not, Mrs. Dudley?"

Mrs. Dudley hesitated. She was very angry indeed that Sir Everard should put this strange girl upon her, assuming her to be quite a fit and proper chaperon. Yet she would dearly like to have tea at the Roman camp in the friendly way Sir Everard suggested. She had never been entertained there except as one of a vulgar crowd—archæological, or Girls' Friendly, or Sunday school.

"We are a great deal engaged this week, and I suppose you are going to Scotland as usual for the Twelfth?" she murmured, to gain time for considering.

"We are not going this year," he answered, rising. "I must wish you good day, Miss Lyon. I will talk this plan over with my daughter. Pray don't hurry with the books." Then he shook hands with Mrs. Dudley and left.

"What a remarkably nice man he is," Mrs. Dudley observed, in a tone so intimate as to be almost patronising, as if in rebound from the deferential awe in which she had passed the ten minutes in his

society. "I suppose you have known them quite a long time!"

"Oh, no, not at all," Beatrix answered, vaguely, not in the least because she wished to pretend to a longer acquaintance than was the fact; but from certainty that the Vicar's wife meant to cross-examine her and she would not be cross-examined.

"Miss Treverton is charming, too," Mrs. Dudley went on; "she was such a pet of ours when she was a child. Her father simply adores her; she rules him and the whole house. He does nothing without her approval."

"She is very handsome," said Beatrix, in a neutral tone.

"Is she not? The very picture of her mother, Lady Augusta. There is some gossip about her and Lord Monkchester; but I prophesy she will never leave her father. Do you know any one in this neighbourhood, Miss Lyon?"

"Not a creature. It is extremely pretty here."

"Yes, it is pretty, but hardly enough so to bring people from a distance. We never expected Mrs. Slater would get her cottage let. No one seems to come except to the Monkchester Hydro, and a few men to shoot and fish. The fishing is good, but the shooting very poor. Don't you find it very dull?"

"No, not at all. Let me give you some tea," as a fresh supply came in, making a break in what passed for conversation in Mrs. Dudley's estimation.

She found it very much more difficult than she expected to "get anything out of" Beatrix. There was a gentle dignity about her, and a perfect simplicity, that warded off attacks. Mrs. Dudley dared not ask questions more direct, and she could not find out the exact terms on which Miss Lyon stood with the Trevertons by hinting. If she had had an introduction to them—as seemed possible from the apparent intimacy between her and Sir Everard, from the fact of her coming to Oswaldburn, and her very good manners, and perfect unconsciousness that there was high and exceptional honour in knowing the Trevertons at all—it would be safest not to annoy her by curiosity; that would also imply the Vicar's wife to stand on a lower ground than herself.

She left her, feeling very much disappointed and perplexed—the perplexity growing with every step that took her farther and farther from the lulling influence of Beatrix's manner; the dis-

appointment becoming vexation, and then anger.

"But time will show," she consoled herself. "Gentlemen's calls count for nothing, unless for worse than nothing. I will not commit myself until I hear what Miss Treverton does and says."

Sir Everard left the cottage, also in a disturbed state of mind. New emotions had been stirred within him, but were still in such a state of shapeless immaturity that he could not understand them, or give them their right proportions and position. The dominant sense seemed to be annoyance. Every one annoyed him—Mrs. Dudley, Helena—yes, even Helena! What had given the girl such an extraordinarily prejudiced impression against Miss Lyon? She was a perfectly well-bred lady, cultivated and refined. He must tell Helena so, and remove the prejudice. Why should it not be easy to do that? Why should it seem so difficult to tell Helena even that he had been at the cottage? Why need he tell Helena? It was absurd to think that he needed the sympathy and approval of his child. Was it not possible that Helena might be just a little jealous, just a little tyrannical? It was very bad for her to be so encouraged in her despotism. He had spoiled the girl; it would be good for her to begin the unspoiling at once. He would insist upon her calling on Miss Lyon.

As he drew nearer to the house, he found himself remembering, with pleasure and relief, that Mrs. Meynell would come back with Helena to dine. That would postpone the evil day of the unspoiling; would also postpone enquiries too minute as to how he had spent the afternoon. It was ridiculous that he should have to account for every hour of absence like a child. How had it happened that he should have submitted so long to that sort of thing? Well, if he had liked it, liked to tell her all about his walks and rides abroad, and liked her intense interest in everything he did, that might all be carried too far, and it was not good for the girl. Even a wife had not the right to examine into every hour of her husband's life. Perhaps it was for want of the lawful rule of a wife that he had fallen under the heavy yoke of an only child. It was not good for a young girl to be thus paramount. It was a very sad thing that the beneficent authority of a mother should have been taken from her; that she should not have learned wisdom and docility in a

lower place. It was very sad for a girl to be motherless; the loss was irreparable, of course. Was it wholly irreparable, or was it not?

He was quite startled as he went into the hall to find Helena there to meet him. He felt like a murderer caught red-handed; as if she must not only see written upon him the disloyal thoughts that had been working in his mind, but detect traces of Heather Cottage lingering about him, like the smell of cigars or disinfectants. Guilt suggested to him in a moment that she had hurried home to take him thus un-awares, and find out his secret, and he found in this hypothesis a just reason for feeling put out.

But her face was radiant, not overhung with threatening clouds.

"I thought you would never come back," she cried, rushing up to him and holding both his hands in hers.

He was softened, contrite. After all, it was very sweet to be all the world to a fair young woman, and surely that young woman was none the less sweet because she happened to be his daughter. Where could he find love more entire, more faithful? Each of them was first to the other; she could not endure even an afternoon without him; and had he returned such devotion with one treasonable thought?

"And where is Mrs. Meynell?" he asked, kissing her.

"Mrs. Meynell? Oh, I forgot all about her!"

She drew her arm through her father's, and led him into her own pretty sitting-room, full of her birds, books, and flowers. She pushed him gently but firmly into a deep, low chair, and then took her place on a stool at his knee.

"I have news for you," she said.

"Don't tell me that the Petres are coming here, since there is no Ronaldsay; and it may be anything!"

"You will be very, very sorry for this news."

"Hardly, since it pleases you so much."

"But I am very sorry, too, as well as glad, and you will be glad, as well as sorry."

"Give it up! I cannot guess conundrums."

"Well—Lord Monkchester is appointed

Ambassador. I know they only call it Minister, or *Chargé d'Affaires*; but it means the same thing——"

"Not quite."

"Don't interrupt; the meaning is everything. Ambassador to the Republic of Chimborazo."

"Ah! that is rather surprising; not a thing to be altogether ecstatic about. The climate is villainous; it is a white man's grave, and a petty, shaky, little, miserable Republic! I am surprised at him accepting it. We shall miss him in the county; but it will be penal servitude for him."

"Papa, it is almost royalty!"

"Fudge! He knows better than that, or he ought. I must see him, and persuade him against it. I cannot understand it; a man who likes home sport and home duties. Helena, is it your fault? Have you refused him—driven him to exile?"

"Really, papa, I wish you would see things from a rational point of view; Lord Monkchester did, as soon as I pointed out the advantages of the post."

"Then it was you who persuaded him to be an exile, a fever-stricken——?"

"To be a King in all but name," she answered, with flashing eyes.

"A great deal you knew about it. Pray, which were the advantages, besides being a King in all but name, that you so lucidly pointed out? I fear the others would be all of the same sort as the royalty."

"Well, the advantage he seemed to see most forcibly was that I should go with him."

"You, Helena!"

"Yes. We are engaged. Salute me—the Ambassador's wife."

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